DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 074 564 CS 500 222

AUTHOR Howell, William S.
TITLE Modern Trends in Persuasion in Business and Industry.
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Central States Speech Association (Minneapolis, April 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Business Administration; *Business Education; *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Industry; *Information Theory; Interaction Process Analysis; Nonverbal Communication; *Persuasive Discourse; Verbal Communication

ABSTRACT

The author suggests that we are moving into an era where skills in persuasion are considered prerequisite to other management skills and discusses the emphasis on interpersonal communication as a continuing process that serves the purpose of making known and available to an industrial group the resources of individual human beings. He cites the "prime movers" of the new trends in persuasion, with brief statements of their principal ideas and contributions. The author concludes by outlining clues to future developments or trends: closer interaction between sales and management training; increased study of nonverbal communication; intercultural approaches to communications problems; effects of emotion on organizational operations; and increased requests for assistance to business from the academic world. (RN)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 074564

# Modern Trends in Persuasion in Business and Industry

William S. Howell
University of Minnesota

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY William S. Howell

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

(This paper was delivered at the Central States Speech Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota on April 6, 1973)

## Introduction

For at least as long as I can remember skill in persuasion has been considered important in business and industry. In the 40's and early 50's training in persuasion was made available mainly to sales personnel, at first to sales managers and later to salesmen. During the late 50's and the 60's the belief that persuasion was important to all management gained momentum. Now an understanding of the process of persuasion and the ability to persuade are recognized as high priorities in both managing and selling. My subjective impression is that the more successful corporations are fully as anxious to help their managers and executives become better persuaders as they are to improve the persuasive talents of their sales staff.

It is amazing that with all the changes in management practices and the fads in communication that have come and gone persuasion has retained its status as a vital element in the business establishment, one which can be studied, analyzed, practiced and consciously applied. Persuasion theories and methods of training have evolved rapidly but the recognition that an increase in persuasive abilities of management pays off in humane and material consequences remains unchallenged. Like Parker Pen and Kodak, persuasion has kept its sales appeal better than have most competing products.

## A Separate Reality

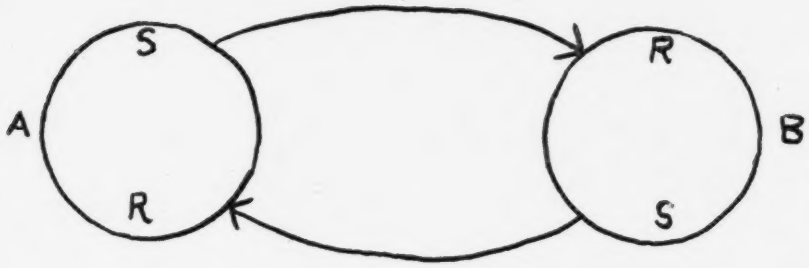
The "separate reality" described by Carlos Castaneda[1] differs from conventional Western notions of reality no more than the new concept of organizational persuasion differs from the old in the business establishment. At the center of revolutionary change is a tremendous escalation of the importance of eyeball-to-eyeball interpersonal communication. Strangely enough modern data processing and the computor accelerated this change.

When John Kenneth Galbraith talked to our University of Minnesota convocation a couple of years ago he said, "Information cannot be retrieved--and applied--in an organization without face-to-face communication." He stated what should have been obvious. Modern electronic devices can store massive amounts of data and retrieve selected information quickly, but in order to choose the particular items of information to be used from that retrieved, and to apply these to the solution of a particular problem, persons with differing expertise must meet and "talk it over." Realization of the critical nature of such task-oriented small group interaction elevated training in interpersonal communication from low status to high priority.

CS500 222

The combination of conceptualizing interpersonal communication as process in communication theory and the dynamic exchange in small work groups caused business to shift from a sending and receiving paradigm to an interactive model. SMCR, sender-message-channel-receiver, went out the window. Interpersonal communication was treated as a joint venture, characterized by the key words "feedback" and "circularity". The correct model:

Dyadic Interpersonal Communication




Since each circle represents a person, each person is both sender and receiver. At least the possibility that A and B might contribute equally to the outcome is suggested diagramatically. Either A or B may initiate and conclude an arbitrary unit of interaction. In face-to-face communication message and channel are embodied in person, so need not appear in the model.

What motivated industry to revise concepts and increase investment in interpersonal communication? One purpose was served: TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE GROUP THE RESOURCES OF INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEINGS. Only effective spoken interaction accomplished this end.

Thus far we have remained safely aloft in high flown theory. I will extend this blissful state by one summary generalization. The "separate reality" of interpersonal persuasion in the world of business is INTERACTIVE, PERCEPTUAL and DYADIC. Now we must leave cloudland and confront our hard-nosed associates who are probably snarling, "OK, SO WHAT?"

So, this. We can examine the nature of specific interactions to learn about communication rather than concentrate upon sources, messages or receivers. For example, we are now able to use the terms "power" and "authority" meaningfully and usefully. Power produces forced compliance and authority, willing cooperation. A manager issues a request. Is he exerting power or authority? That depends. Employee A does not refuse, and power does the persuading. Employee B likes the idea and wants to help the boss impliment it, and authority is exercised. Truly, the basic unit of interpersonal communication is the dyad, and $dyad_1$ is not $dyad_2$!

So---one more example, in answer to the "SO WHAT?" challenge to the effects of the interactive, dyadic, perceptual frame. A huge corporation based in the Twin Cities formerly supplied its account executives around the world with a thick manual of procedures and firm instructions to follow them. Now the manual is a thin spiral bound affair and the employee is instructed to pick up general guidelines from it but to violate these or any standard procedure when violation seems to him to be a good idea. The separate reality of particular interactions led in this corporation to the slogan: "Conforming to Procedures is Insufficient."

The Prime Movers

The relatively enlightened practice of persuasion pictured above evolved over two decades, not spontaneously but because capable leaders both pointed the way, and pushed, aggressively. The persons who were "prime movers" I list below, with vastly over-simplified statements summarizing their contributions.

Motivation was made a useful construct by Abraham Maslow[2], Frederick Herzberg[3], G.W. Allport[4] and David C. McClelland[5]. Maslow contributed the hierarchy of deficit motivation, visualized in his famous pyramid. Herzberg identified on-the-job satisfiers and dissatisfiers and clarified their quite different functions. More important, perhaps, he was able to destroy the popular fallacy that motives can be given to people. He did this with an analogy. Motives, he said, are generators. You can't install a generator in a person, it is already there. If you are lucky, you can get it running!

G.W. Allport refined Maslow's crude notion of self-actualized people by acquainting us with the "proprium", that little noted but powerful motivation that is energized by our interest in something or someone outside ourselves. McClelland isolated the part of the proprium most important to the business world, achievement motivation, measured it, correlated strength of achievement motivation with managerial productivity, and experimented with training to increase achievement motivation. Bormann, Howell, Nichols and Shapiro brought these concepts together in a system of motive analysis, represented diagrammatically in their "Oval of Human Motivation."[6]

The Human Potential Movement[7] helped shape modern persuasion in industry. This compartment in the behavioral sciences includes group relations from Esalen and Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice to Encounter, to T. Groups to Tavistock. Of dozens of fads and theories of human interaction two survive in industry. One is the concept of openness, represented in and applied by the Jo-Hari Window.[8] Apparently, the ability to be open correlates with effectiveness in interpersonal persuasion. But industry finds that contrary to the advice of the humanistic psychologists, being wide open all the time doesn't work. In practice, being as open as a situation permits, however, is rewarding.

But by far the most influential of the concepts coming out of the Human Potential Movement is Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid.[9] This graphic device provides a means by which management can balance concern for people and concern for production. It puts participative management in context. As a result of the almost universal acceptance of the Managerial Grid, all around the world people are treated more like individual human beings and less like machines than was the case in pre-Grid times. This happens in many cultures, in business, government, military, and academic organizations. Truly, the Grid was an idea whose time had come.

From marketing research has come a concept the impact of which is only beginning to be felt. Frank Evans[10] in a pioneering study assessed the variables in a dyadic selling situation, and found that one element predicted the outcome more than did any other variable, or any combination of variables. This "X" factor was the way the two people felt about each other at the conclusion of the interview. Evans calls this warm feeling or rapport the Quality of Dyadic Interaction. The ability to produce this mutual respect, liking and good will may well be the most basic talent of a manager. How to train people to produce high quality dyadic interactions, something obviously vital to a productive organization, is a challenge that is beginning to capture the imagination of top personnel in business and industry.

Influence of the prime movers is an active, powerful force that will continue for many years into the future. Directions of change are established, but much implementation remains to be done.

Clues to the Future

The following tendencies are too immature to be termed "trends". However, they suggest possible developments in which scholars of persuasion might make substantial contributions.

1. Sales and Management Training are Coming to Resemble Each Other.

The dynamics of productive interaction in management and selling are similar. For example, the quality of dyadic interaction is as important to one as to the other. Management by Objectives has been paralleled by Selling by Objectives. The presentation as a form of persuasion is used in both management and sales, and at least one book gives them combined treatment.[11] Participative management has been applied in management of sales as successfully as in the forms of management. Both selling and managing will benefit from sharing insights, methods, theories, and training experiences.

2. Nonverbal Communication is Becoming a Subject of Study and Training.

A new consciousness of the role played by elements of communication other than words in business is rapidly developing. Body lang-

uage of course looms large but expected behaviors, room arrangements, sequence of events, decor, and contrasting male - female perceptions are being examined. Female executive secretaries and male managers brainstormed the topic "Nonverbal sets of Expectations That Make a Difference on the Job."[12] Males and females perceived quite different items as critical. Understanding effects of nonverbal behaviors as well as identifying male-female perceptions can contribute to better communication of all sorts at work.

3. An Intercultural Approach to Communication Problems in Business May Prove to be Rewarding.

Large industries require extensive communication among diverse homogeneous work groups. Only recently has the similarity between this circumstance and transcultural communication been noticed. A personnel manager in a large corporation used a method taken from a study of communication among ethnic groups in Hawaii.[13] He measured the in - group and other - group perceptions of four "job families", Development Engineers, Draftsmen, Production Engineers and Quality Engineers.[14] Self-perceptions of a group were discrepant with perceptions other groups had of them. When the four groups learned about all these self and other perceptions, communication among the groups seemed to improve.

4. The Effects of Emotion on an Organization are Being Assessed.

A person in an upset emotional condition behaves quite differently as persuader or persuadee than when he is calm. We are now checking upon the emotion norms of industry and we are finding that many organizations have a substantial proportion of their personnel in an uptight emotional state of anger or fear a high percentage of the time. Emotional workers are less productive than unemotional workers.[15] Consequently, business is becoming concerned with identifying and controlling the emotional condition of its employees.

Also, the use of emotion for purposes of persuasion is being critically examined. One new middle - manager in a Twin Cities corporation revealed his formula for handling the employees he supervised:

$$p = f/s$$

Productivity, he explained, equals fear over security. His strategy was to keep everyone as afraid and insecure as he could. He lasted less than a month at his new job, but his case suggests that the wholesale use of fear or danger in management needs examination, in both practical and ethical dimensions.

5. Business Needs and Wants Help from the Academic World.

Industry has an abundance of executives and managers who are smart, well-educated and humanitarian. They are also pragmatic. Long experience with Ivory Tower types who have little interest in or aptitude for

the application of their theories has left them with a residue of suspicion. But the applied social scientist who is anxious to collect data on what works and what doesn't work is welcomed in business after a surprisingly short probationary period.

We need more scholarship of application. For example, we can design models for the non-academic user.[16] The greatest laboratory for the study of on-going persuasion in the world is the American free enterprise system. Those of us in education and our associates in business can devise joint ventures of mutual benefit, to our students and to our discipline.[17] If you will accept a personal subjective judgment, I am convinced that my work with executives and managers has stimulated more thoughtful reassessment of my theories of persuasion than have my contacts with associates and graduate and undergraduate students. In the off-campus organizational world I have learned that it isn't a good theory unless it works in practice.

Conclusion

Persuasion in business has high prestige and is conducted in sophisticated fashion worthy of our scholarly interest and participation. At the moment I'm helping design training for district managers of a corporation that will be divided into three modules; motivation, persuasion and transactional analysis. Treatment of each of these three topics will be at least as up-to-date as articles in our scholarly journals. The same company wishes to explore task-oriented small group training, particularly that coming from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London. They feel that human relations training in America prepares persons to use the "soft" variables of love, warmth and trust, but leaves them unequipped to deal with the "hard" variables of power, authority and conflict. These projects are challenging to a professor. I can learn from them.

We are moving into an era where skills in persuasion are considered prerequisite to other management skills. Perhaps this in itself is the most significant modern trend in persuasion in business and industry, at least for the scholar and teacher of the process of persuasion.

## FOOTNOTES

1 Carlos Castaneda. A Separate Reality. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

2 Abraham Maslow. Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966.

3 Frederick Herzberg. Work and the Nature of Man. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1966.

4 Gordon W. Allport. Pattern and Growth in Personality. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961.

5 David C. McClelland and David G. Winter. Motivating Economic Achievement. New York: The Free Press, 1969.

6 Ernest G. Bormann, William S. Howell, Ralph G. Nichols and George L. Shapiro. Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969. P. 293

7 For an excellent introduction to the Human Potential Movement and Humanistic Psychology see Frank Goble, The Third Force. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970.

8 Robert T. Golembiewski and Arthur Blumberg, editors. Sensitivity Training and the Laboratory Approach. Itasca, Ill.: F.E. Peacock, Publishers, 1970. p. 61.

9 Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton. The Managerial Grid. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Co., 1964.

10 Franklyn B. Evans. Dyadic Interaction in Selling-- a New Approach. An unpublished study done at the University of Chicago in 1964.

11 William S. Howell and Ernest G. Bormann. Presentational Speaking for Business and the Professions. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971.

12 In a preliminary comparison of important nonverbal expectations on the job in Minneapolis during the winter of 1973, forty female executive secretaries listed categories different from those listed by twenty-four male middle managers. The women considered subtle voice, posture and eye cues as significant while the men tended to read significance into relatively gross phenomona such as seating arrangement, closed or open doors and sitting or standing. Two items on the female listing seem to surprise males, namely "strategic silence" and "seductive body movements."

13 "Project HOE - Exploratory Study of Intercultural Communication in Hawaii - Phase I". Investigators were Franklyn B. Evans and William S. Howell. The study was reported at the Speech Association of America Convention in December, 1967.

14 Harold E. Crawford. A Study on Intergroup Attitudes. An unpublished study done at the University of Minnesota in 1969.

15 Bormann, et al. pp. 242-248

16 William S. Howell. "A Model as an Approach to Interpersonal Communication" in Fred Luthans, ed. Contemporary Readings in Organizational Behavior. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1972. pp. 151-160

17 An example of school-industry cooperation is the YMCA sponsored management intern program at the University of Minnesota where students from various schools in the University spend a quarter working 40 hours a week in local industries on particular problems of management.